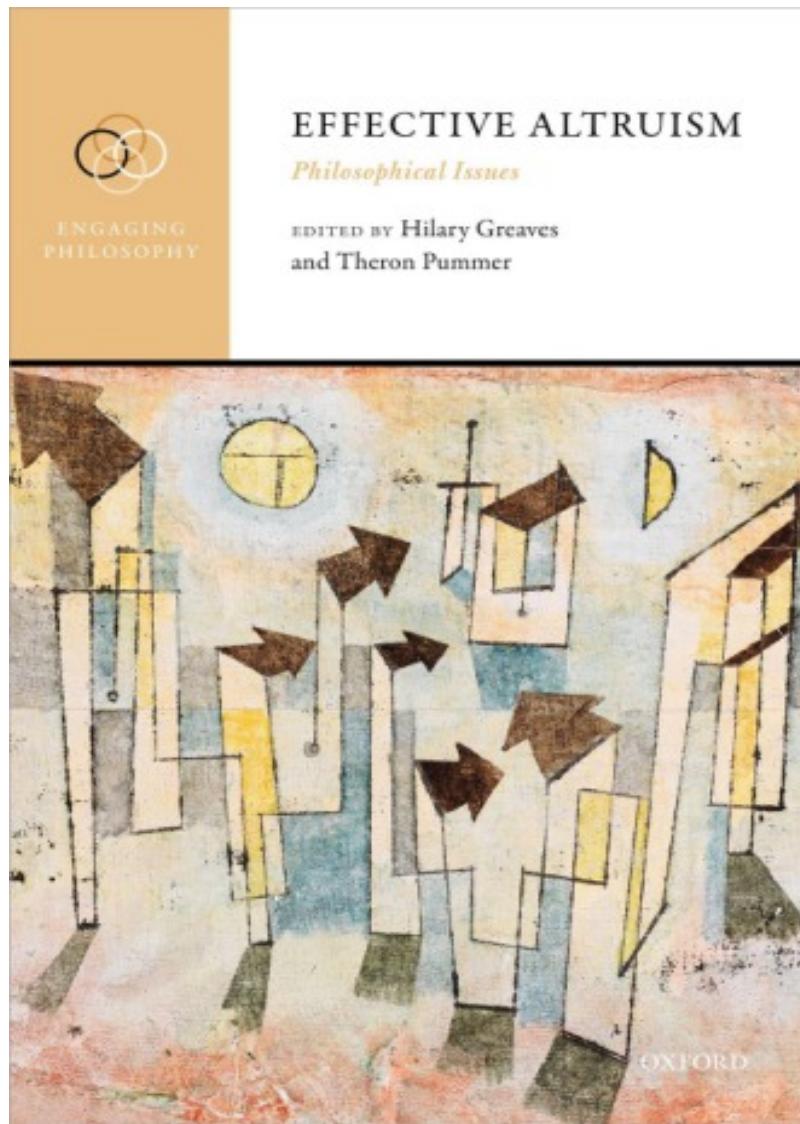


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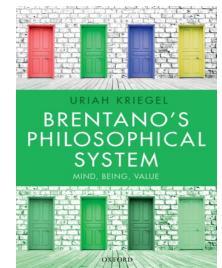


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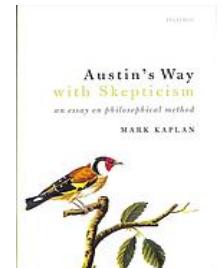
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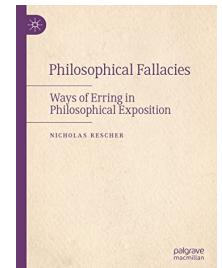
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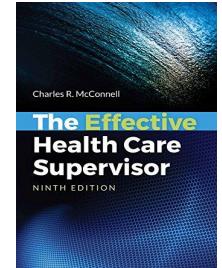
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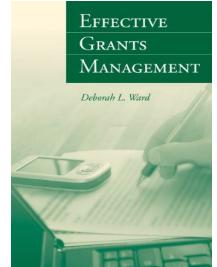
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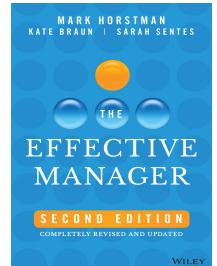
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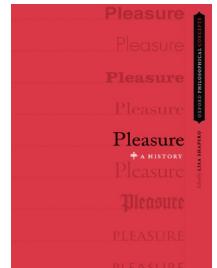
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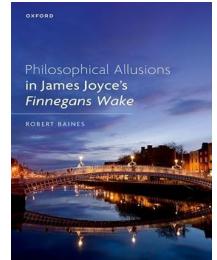
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# EFFECTIVE ALTRUISM

*Philosophical Issues*

EDITED BY Hilary Greaves  
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# Effective Altruism

*Philosophical Issues*

*Edited by*

HILARY GREAVES AND THERON PUMMER

**OXFORD**  
UNIVERSITY PRESS



Great Clarendon Street, Oxford, OX2 6DP,  
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First Edition published in 2019

Impression: 1

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Published in the United States of America by Oxford University Press  
198 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10016, United States of America

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

Data available

Library of Congress Control Number: 2019947210

ISBN 978-0-19-884136-4

Printed and bound in Great Britain by  
Clays Ltd, Elcograf S.p.A.

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# Foreword

*Peter Singer*

The emergence of effective altruism caught me by surprise. Thirty years earlier I had argued, in “Famine, Affluence and Morality”<sup>1</sup> that it is wrong to spend money on things we do not need when elsewhere people cannot get enough to eat, and we could use the money we are spending to help them meet their basic needs. The article was discussed in philosophy journals, reprinted in ethics anthologies, and assigned to thousands of students to read and discuss; but most of the professors assigning it presented it as an intellectual challenge, rather than an ethical one. “Here is an argument that proceeds from plausible premises,” they would say, “and seems to use sound reasoning. Yet it concludes that we are all doing something seriously wrong, like failing to rescue a drowning child from a shallow pond. That conclusion can’t be right, so where does the mistake lie?” Many professors told me that they enjoyed teaching the article because it always provoked a lively discussion, but very few students did anything to help people in extreme poverty.

I became accustomed to that disappointing response. During the first decade of the new millennium, however, there was a perceptible uptick in concern about global poverty. The Millennium Development Goals contributed to that, as did the example set by Bill and Melinda Gates putting most of their wealth into a foundation focused on eliminating the preventable diseases like malaria and diarrhea that claim the lives of so many people in extreme poverty.

So when Professor Julian Savulescu invited to give the Uehiro Lectures in Practical Ethics at Oxford University in 2007, I decided to revisit the theme of global poverty and what we ought to do about it. As I was preparing the lectures, Julian emailed me about an Oxford graduate student in philosophy named Toby Ord who wanted to meet me. Toby said that my argument for individual action on poverty had struck a chord with him, and he had founded an organization called Giving What We Can. The email quoted him as saying that Giving What We Can “aims to help people give more effectively and share ideas about making donation a central part of their lives.” Toby (who explains more of his thinking in his essay in this book) asked if I would be able to take part in a discussion with students while I was in Oxford. I replied that I would be happy to do so. That was the first inkling I had of the movement that was to become effective altruism.

<sup>1</sup> *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 1 (1972), 229–43.

Since 2007 effective altruism has grown in many different ways including the number of people involved, the research done into the most effective ways to give, and the amount of money that has gone to those charities that the research has suggested will do the most good with every dollar they receive. (Will MacAskill gives some relevant figures in his contribution to this book, so I won't repeat them here.) Effective altruism has spread around the world, facilitated by the internet, and generated an immense amount of discussion on web forums and blogs. The scope of the movement has also broadened. It can no longer be assumed that effective altruists focus solely or even primarily on helping people in extreme poverty, because there are rival contenders for how we can do the most good. (Although I continue to think that helping people in extreme poverty compares well with the other contenders.)

With so much online discussion about effective altruism and the issues it raises, it was difficult to get an overall sense of the field, or its key issues. Nor was it easy to separate the contributions that were well argued and worth reading from more casual comments that did not stand up to scrutiny. That is why I welcome this volume. Its carefully selected set of essays will serve for a long time as a high-quality introduction to the philosophical and ethical issues raised by effective altruism.

There is often a danger that getting to know all the different views about a complex question can, by undermining our confidence that we know what we ought to do, lead to a kind of paralysis. I will therefore close this foreword with a reminder: even if there is disagreement among thoughtful effective altruists about what is the *best* thing to do, there is a consensus that several actions open to us—including helping people in extreme poverty and reducing the suffering of animals on factory farms—are far better than doing nothing at all.

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# Introduction

*Hilary Greaves and Theron Pummer*

The two key ideas of *effective altruism* are represented in its name. *Altruism*: If we use a significant portion of the resources in our possession—whether money, time, or talents—with a view to helping others, we can improve the world considerably. *Effectiveness*: When we do put such resources to altruistic use, it is crucial to focus on how much good this or that intervention is reasonably expected to do per unit of resource expended (for example, how many lives are saved, in expectation, per \$1,000 donated). How wisely one chooses among available interventions tends to matter far more than how large a pot of resources one is willing to assign for altruistic purposes. Even setting aside those interventions that, while well-intentioned, turn out to be useless or even counterproductive—the familiar theme of the “aid scepticism” literature—interventions routinely vary in cost-effectiveness by multiple orders of magnitude.

The effective altruism movement consists of a growing global community of people who organize significant parts of their lives around these two ideas. For some, this takes the shape of donating a proportion of their income—10 per cent is a standard figure, although many donate much more—to carefully chosen charitable organizations. Others choose their career path with an explicit and keen eye towards what will be most beneficial for the world at large. In all cases, the appeal to evidence and reason is crucial to the purpose of an impartial assessment of expected effectiveness.

Assessing expected effectiveness is, of course, no easy matter. Sometimes it requires paying attention to large and complex bodies of evidence, as well as expending time and effort in processing that evidence. In other cases, the issue is more the *paucity* of available evidence, and the potentially daunting task of determining how confident to be about the possible outcomes of interventions in such an evidentially impoverished area. Things are more complicated still, as what matters is the difference an intervention makes—what does it bring about that wouldn’t have happened otherwise? For these reasons, effectiveness assessments are often centralized. For example, the non-profit organization GiveWell is entirely devoted to assessing charities that help those in extreme poverty in terms of the additional benefits delivered for each extra dollar donated; Animal Charity Evaluators has a similar mission with respect to charities focusing on animal

welfare. Many people who would self-identify as members of the effective altruism movement base charitable donations very closely on the recommendations of such “meta-charities”. For graduates and young professionals interested in choosing careers with the objective of maximizing their beneficial impact, the organization 80,000 Hours specializes in providing advice on choosing careers aimed at doing the most good.

A further issue follows naturally from the idea of effectiveness. While global poverty is a widely used case study in introducing and motivating effective altruism, if the aim is to *do the most good one can* per unit resource expended, it is far from obvious that global poverty alleviation is the best cause to intervene on. In addition to ranking possible poverty-alleviation interventions against one another, one can also try to rank interventions aimed at very different types of outcome against one another, again in terms of good done per unit resource expended. Here the comparisons are difficult even in the presence of full descriptive information—one is to some extent comparing apples with oranges—but it does not follow that all bets are off. It is not uncommon for mediocre interventions in one area to do much less good than the best interventions in another area, based on any credible theory of the good. This is very plausibly the case, for example, when comparing donations to support museums with donations to support the best global health interventions.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, it is plausible that even the best interventions in some areas do much less good than the best in others. A core part of effective altruism is thus *cause-neutrality*: choosing causes to intervene on on the basis of which afford the opportunity to do the most good with one’s limited resources, rather than on the basis of (say) personal connections or passions.

None of these ideas is entirely new. The idea of keeping self-indulgences relatively low for the sake of spending more on helping others, in particular, has been around for centuries. As early as the fourth century BC, the Chinese philosopher Mozi advocated a concept of universal caring (jiān’ài, 兼愛) according to which one should not prioritize oneself or one’s own family over strangers, and criticized indulgence in such things as fine food, music, and dance for consuming resources that would better be spent enhancing the prosperity and stability of society at large.<sup>2</sup> Christian ethics through the ages has consistently emphasized moral obligations to provide only for one’s family’s basic needs, and to give whatever is left over for the benefit of the poor, sometimes adding that the resources in question rightfully *belong* to the poor in any case, so that not to behave in the recommended way is theft.<sup>3</sup> Utilitarian moral philosophy famously holds that one ought to give resources for the benefit of others whenever doing so would benefit

<sup>1</sup> Singer (2015).

<sup>2</sup> Johnston (2010).

<sup>3</sup> See, for example: Basil of Caesarea (372), *Homily on Luke 12:18*; Thomas Aquinas (1274), *Summa Theologica*; and Paul VI (1967), *Encyclical Letter (Populorum Progressio) of His Holiness Paul VI on Fostering the Development of Peoples*. Full references, and a useful overview, can be found in Ord (2014, section 4).

others more than it would harm oneself. More recently—but still nearly half a century ago—Peter Singer has defended a “Principle of Sacrifice”, according to which “if it is in our power to prevent something very bad from happening, without thereby sacrificing anything morally significant, we ought, morally, to do it”.<sup>4</sup> As Singer rightly emphasizes, in a world of radical economic inequality, this perhaps innocuous-sounding principle in fact requires very significant sacrifice from those at the richer end of the wealth spectrum; it suggests that keeping any degree of luxury in one’s life is morally on a par with walking past a child who is drowning in a pond, refusing to incur the minimal cost and inconvenience that would be involved in saving the child’s life.

The focus on effectiveness is somewhat newer. In the context of philanthropic donation, in particular, it is quite common to assess acts of donation more or less *exclusively* in terms of amount donated and cause area supported, with little or no thought given to questions of effectiveness. The prevalence of this “effectiveness-free” mode of thinking is arguably quite odd, given that we do not assess *self-interested* expenditures purely in terms of amount expended, without paying any attention to the returns thereby generated. But on the topic of effectiveness as well as that of altruism, there are clear forerunners of the effective altruism movement. Carnegie’s Gospel of Wealth urges that those who have had great success in business should devote the last period of their life to carefully disposing of their fortune for the public good, as their success indicates a more general talent for identifying wise investments, which is as crucial in philanthropy as it is in business.<sup>5</sup> Since at least the 1990s, there has been an increasing focus on the use of randomized controlled trials (RCTs) to investigate the effectiveness of interventions that are intended to alleviate global poverty, and increasing uptake of the results of such investigations by governmental and voluntary sector aid agencies.

What, then, is new about effective altruism? Perhaps ‘only’ its scale, and (relatively) community organization.<sup>6</sup> But these are significant. In particular, the fact that there now exists such a community is a spur to “outsiders” to reconsider whether they should follow suit, and to “insiders” to engage in careful dialogue about the best form of their activity. Questions that have perhaps long been there are thrown into new and sharper relief, and previously unnoticed questions arise.

That is the state of affairs that gives the impetus for the present volume. We have invited a group of internationally recognized philosophers, economists, and political theorists to contribute in-depth explorations of issues that arise once one takes seriously the twin ideas of altruistic commitment and effectiveness.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Singer (1972).

<sup>5</sup> Carnegie (1889).

<sup>6</sup> It is arguably unsurprising that the explosion of scale and organization has come at this point in history, with the growth of the internet and wider availability of relevant evidence concerning opportunities for impact.

<sup>7</sup> For the most part, the essays are not reflections on effective altruism itself as a social movement; accordingly, most do not mention the movement by name, or do so at most in passing.

In the remainder of this introductory chapter, we briefly summarize the topic of each contribution.

The first two chapters introduce some of the basics of effective altruism. The term “effective altruism” has no official definition, meaning that different authors will inevitably understand the term in different ways. Since this harbours the potential for considerable confusion, we invited William MacAskill, one of the leaders of the effective altruism movement, to contribute a chapter aimed at fore-stalling some of these potential confusions. The result was this book’s opening chapter: “The Definition of Effective Altruism”. In this chapter, MacAskill first outlines a brief history of the effective altruism movement. He then proposes his preferred definition of “effective altruism”, aiming to capture the central activities and concerns of those most deeply involved in the movement. Finally, he replies to various common misconceptions about the movement. These include the views that effective altruism is just utilitarianism, that it is purely about poverty alleviation, that it is purely about donations, and that it in principle ignores possibilities for systemic change.

“The Moral Imperative Toward Cost-Effectiveness in Global Health” by Toby Ord was written at a relatively early stage of the development of the effective altruism movement.<sup>8</sup> This piece focuses on the notion of cost-effectiveness that is central to effective altruists’ decisions among courses of action. Using vivid examples from the context of global health, Ord illustrates the point that we have already alluded to above—that cost-effectiveness can vary by several orders of magnitude, even between alternative interventions within the same cause area. Ord argues that, because of this, considerations of cost-effectiveness deserve very high priority in the ethics of deciding among interventions.

The next three chapters concern evidence and decision-making. In “Evidence Neutrality and the Moral Value of Information”, Amanda Askell takes up the question of whether there is a case for favouring interventions whose effectiveness has stronger evidential support, when expected effectiveness is equal. Of course, in practice expected effectiveness might well not be equal: as Askell notes, given a sceptical prior, it might be only in the presence of substantial positive evidence that any intervention can have an expected value significantly higher than that of “doing nothing”. But is there a case for favouring evidence-backed interventions *over and above* this contribution of evidence to expected value? Via consideration of an analogy to the multi-armed bandit problem, Askell argues that in fact, the reverse is true: when expected value is equal one should prefer to invest in interventions that have *less* evidential support, on the grounds that by doing so one can

<sup>8</sup> This piece was originally commissioned by the Center for Global Development (CGD), and was published as “The Moral Imperative toward Cost-Effectiveness in Global Health”, in the following report: A Glassman and K. Chalkidou (eds.), *Priority setting in health: building institutions for smarter public spending*, Washington DC: The Center for Global Development, 2012.

acquire evidence of their effectiveness (or ineffectiveness) that may then be valuable for future investment decisions. The tendency to behave otherwise, she suggests, is due to the widespread but irrational tendency towards ambiguity aversion.

In “Effective Altruism and Transformative Experience”, Jeff Sebo and Laurie Paul investigate the phenomenon of experiences that transform the experiencer, either epistemically (having the experience is a necessary condition for knowing what it is like to have that experience), personally (having the experience causes a change in a core personal belief, value, or practice), or both. The possibility of such experiences, Sebo and Paul argue, frequently complicates the practice of rational decision-making. First, in cases in which your own experience is a relevant part of the outcome to be evaluated, in transformative cases one cannot make well-evidenced predictions of the value of the outcome at the time of decision; this creates a challenge for any attempt to base decision-making on a strong body of evidence (rather than e.g. on plausible speculation). Second, in cases in which one foresees that one’s preferences would change following the decision, there are issues about whether rational decision-making should be based only on one’s *ex ante* preferences, or should also incorporate some element of deference to foreseen future preferences. While these issues arise quite generally, Paul and Sebo suggest that they are especially pressing in the context of effective altruism.

In “Should We Give to More Than One Charity?”, James Snowden examines whether and why a donor might have good reason to split their donations among different charities, rather than give to a single charity. Snowden argues that, in simplified decision contexts, donors maximize expected utility by giving to only one charity. He engages with recent work on risk aversion in decision theory (e.g. by Lara Buchak), arguing that there is an important difference between self-regarding and other-regarding choices. When choosing between lotteries that affect the welfare of others, we should reject risk aversion, instead maximizing expected welfare. In more complex and realistic contexts, there may be various reasons to donate to multiple charities, consistent with maximizing expected utility. However, Snowden argues that the most persuasive such reasons apply to large grant-making institutions rather than typical individual donors.

The next two chapters are on cause prioritization. In “A Brief Argument for the Overwhelming Importance of Shaping the Far Future”, Nick Beckstead argues that the best available interventions gain most of their expected value via the effects that they have on the long-run future, rather than via their more immediate effects. Because of the vastness of humanity’s possible future, this line of argument tends to favour actions that reduce risks of premature extinction, and actions that increase probabilities of other significantly beneficial “trajectory changes” to the course of humanity’s long-run future, even where the change in probabilities that we are able to bring about is very small.

In “Effective Altruism, Global Poverty, and Systemic Change”, Iason Gabriel and Brian McElwee examine the status of interventions aimed at bringing about

large-scale systemic change, within effective altruism's efforts to tackle issues of poverty. Given the standard framework for assessing decisions taken under uncertainty in terms of expected value, they point out, there are in principle several different ways in which an intervention could score highly: by delivering only relatively modest benefits but doing so with high probability ("low value/high confidence"), by delivering very large benefits with low probability ("high value/low confidence"), or something in between ("medium value/medium confidence"). According to Gabriel and McElwee, in the domain of global poverty, (i) philanthropic interventions favoured by effective altruists tend to take the form of narrowly focused practical interventions designed to help those living in extreme poverty, which achieve fairly high expected value via the "low value/high confidence" route, but (ii) it is quite likely that there are *ex ante* better interventions—interventions, that is, with higher expected value per unit cost—that tackle global poverty via systemic change, achieving high expected value instead via the "medium value/medium confidence" pattern. In other contexts, however, effective altruism definitely does take seriously some very "high value/low confidence" interventions (namely, efforts to mitigate extinction risk), so there does not seem to be any simple bias towards high confidence at work here. The explanation, Gabriel and McElwee suggest, lies in a related and understandable, yet still misguided, preference for political neutrality within the effective altruism movement.

In "Benevolent Giving and the Problem of Paternalism", Emma Saunders-Hastings argues that some attempts to promote welfare through charitable giving can be objectionably paternalistic, and explores what avoiding such paternalism would require. She defends a view according to which our moral reason to avoid paternalistic behaviour is grounded in the importance of social and political relations, which in turn require respect for autonomous agents. This respect is potentially compromised when donors act as if they are entitled to maximally pursue their own conception of the good. Saunders-Hastings argues that we should at least take account of the instrumental importance of these relations, e.g. their importance to welfare. If they have intrinsic importance, then they have to be balanced against the independent importance of promoting welfare.

The next two chapters concern demandingness: the issue of how much sacrifice, relative perhaps to a life that would count as minimally decent by the standard of common-sense morality, true morality requires of us. Rather than telling people that they are *morally required* to give large amounts of money or time to the most cost-effective interventions, the effective altruism movement has usually adopted an approach of *inspiring* others to view engaging in the project as a great *opportunity*; several authors have worried, or anyway assumed, that confronting people with highly demanding moral requirements would be counterproductive, in the sense of causing people to turn away from morality, and thus actually decreasing (for instance) amounts donated. In "Demanding the Demanding", Ben Sachs notes that whether or not such behaviour would be counterproductive is a

non-obvious empirical matter. After reviewing the available evidence, Sachs concludes that we should not be at all confident that “demanding the demanding” would be counterproductive. Sachs argues that more empirical studies are needed, but tentatively defends a theory of moral psychology according to which, when people are confronted with a demanding ethical theory (like act consequentialism) they will, if they accept the theory, respond by *coming close* to conforming to it.

A familiar theme in discussions of demandingness is whether there comes a point at which one is no longer morally obliged to do further good (except perhaps in “emergency” cases) even though there continue to be opportunities to do *a lot* more good at *very low* cost to the agent, on the grounds that one has already done enough. In their chapter “On Satisfying Duties to Assist”, Christian Barry and Holly Lawford-Smith take up this question. More specifically, they ask: under precisely what conditions is it plausible to say that that “point” has been reached? A crude account might focus only on, say, the amount of good the agent has already done, but a moment’s reflection shows that this is indeed too crude. Barry and Lawford-Smith develop and defend a nuanced account according to which considerations of three types are all relevant to whether one has satisfied one’s duties to assist: “inputs” (types and quantities of sacrifice made), “characteristics” (the beliefs and intentions that informed the donor’s decisions), and “success” (the extent to which the donations in question succeeded in generating value).

In attempting to do the most good, should you, at a given time, perform the act that is part of the best series of acts you can perform over the course of your life, or should you perform the act that would be best, given what you would actually do later? Possibilists say you should do the former, whereas actualists say you should do the latter. In “Effective Altruism’s Underspecification Problem”, Travis Timmerman explores the debate between possibilism and actualism, and its implications for effective altruism. Each of these two alternatives, he argues, is implausible in its own right as well as at odds with typical effective altruist commitments. Timmerman argues that the best way out of this dilemma is to adopt a hybrid view. Timmerman’s preferred version of hybridism is possibilist at the level of criterion of right action, but actualist at the level of decision procedure.

The next two chapters concern group action and coordination. In “The Hidden Zero Problem: Effective Altruism and Barriers to Marginal Impact”, Mark Budolfson and Dean Spears analyse the marginal effect of philanthropic donations. The core of their analysis is the observation that marginal good done per dollar donated is a product (in the mathematical sense) of several factors: change in good done per change in activity level of the charity in question, change in activity per change in the charity’s budget size, and change in budget size per change in the individual’s donation to the charity in question. They then discuss the “hidden zero problem” that some of the terms in the equation (in particular, the last term) might be “hidden zeros” that prevent donations from doing any good—or worse, imply that they do harm—even if the charity is at the top of rankings that are

based on one or more of the other factors. One illustration of their worry is that while it might initially seem that one saves a life if (say) one's contribution to the Against Malaria Foundation funds the bed net that prevents a child from contracting a fatal case of malaria, there is a clear sense in which one is not, if that same bed net would otherwise simply have been funded instead by a billionaire who regularly "tops up" that charity to meet all of its fundraising goals.

In "Beyond Individualism", Stephanie Collins examines the idea that individuals can acquire "membership duties" as a result of being members of a group that itself bears duties. In particular, powerful and wealthy states are duty-bearing groups, and their citizens have derivative membership duties (for example, to contribute to putting right wrongs that have been done in the past by the group in question, and to increase the extent to which the group fulfils its duties). In addition, she argues, individuals have duties to signal their willingness to coordinate with others so as to do more good than the sum of what each could do on their own. Putting these two things together, Collins suggests, individuals' duties in (for instance) matters of global poverty might be largely driven by such group-based considerations, leaving little room for the duties that would follow from more individualistic reasoning.

Richard Yetter Chappell's contribution, "Overriding Virtue", examines the moral status of a disposition he calls "abstract benevolence", viz. the disposition to allow abstract considerations of the greater good to override one's natural inclinations towards prioritizing those whose needs are lesser but in some way more emotionally salient. Many people feel that it is callous to act in this manner, and this view seems to comport well with the traditional view of "sympathy" as an important virtue. Chappell argues to the contrary: according to him, we must recognize abstract benevolence as an important virtue for imperfectly virtuous agents living in present times.

Andreas Mogensen's chapter "The Callousness Objection" is on a related theme. It discusses the suggestion that one might be morally obligated to let the child drown in Singer's infamous "Shallow Pond" case, so that one can donate the resources saved to effective organizations, thereby saving more lives. Intuitively, there would be something morally horrendous about doing this. Yet a moral requirement to let the child drown seems to be the conclusion of reasoning very similar to that used by Singer and his allies to argue for demanding duties to donate on the basis of cases like "Shallow Pond"; what should we make of this? Mogensen considers three lines of response. The first two responses involve biting the bullet; Mogensen argues against these. The third line of response attempts to capture *both* the intuition that our obligations to donate to effective life-saving organizations are as strong as our obligations to save the child in "Shallow Pond" and the intuition that one should not allow the child to drown even if by doing so one could save a greater number of lives through donations. The key to

doing this, Mogensen suggests, lies in a distinction, noted by Parfit, between the “cost-requiring” and the “conflict-of-duty” sense of strength of moral obligation.

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# Exploring the Variety of Random Documents with Different Content

and residence; and was answered that his name was Kirkpatrick, and that he lived at a cottage, which he pointed out. Whereupon the gentleman expressed his surprise that he should be unknown to him, since he fancied he had been acquainted with every man on his estate. "It is odd you have never seen me before," returned the old man, "for I walk here every day."

"How old are you?" asked the gentleman.

"I am one hundred and five," answered the other; "and have been here all my life."

After a few more words, they parted; and the gentleman, proceeding toward some laborers in a neighboring field, inquired if they knew an old man of the name of Kirkpatrick. They did not; but on addressing the question to some older tenants, they said, "Oh, yes;" they had known him, and had been at his funeral; he had lived at the cottage on the hill, but had been dead twenty years.

"How old was he when he died?" inquired the gentleman, much amazed. "He was eighty-five," said they: so that the old man gave the age that he would have reached had he survived to the period of this rencontre.

This curious incident is furnished by the gentleman himself and all he can say is, that it certainly occurred, and that he is quite unable to explain it. He was in perfect health at the time, and had never heard of this man in his life, who had been dead several years before the estate came into his possession.

The following is another curious story. The original will be found in the register of the church named, from which it has been copied for my use:—

#### EXTRACT FROM THE REGISTER IN BRISLEY CHURCH, NORFOLK.

"DECEMBER 12, 1706.—I, Robert Withers, M. A., vicar of Gately, do insert here a story which I had from undoubted hands; for I have all the moral certainty of the truth of it possible:—

"Mr. Grose went to see Mr. Shaw on the 2d of August last. As they sat talking in the evening, says Mr. Shaw: 'On the 21st of the last month, as I was smoking a pipe, and reading in my study,

between eleven and twelve at night, in comes Mr. Naylor (formerly fellow of St. John's college, but had been dead full four years). When I saw him, I was not much affrighted, and I asked him to sit down, which accordingly he did for about two hours, and we talked together. I asked him how it fared with him. He said, "Very well."—"Were any of our old acquaintances with him?"—"No!" (at which I was much alarmed), "but Mr. Orchard will be with me soon, and yourself not long after." As he was going away, I asked him if he would not stay a little longer, but he refused. I asked him if he would call again. "No;" he had but three days' leave of absence, and he had other business.'

"N. B.—Mr. Orchard died soon after. Mr. Shaw is now dead: he was formerly fellow of St. John's college—an ingenious, good man. I knew him there; but at his death he had a college-living in Oxfordshire, and here he saw the apparition."

An extraordinary circumstance occurred some years ago, in which a very pious and very eminent Scotch minister, Ebenezer Brown of Inverkeithing, was concerned. A person of ill character in the neighborhood having died, the family very shortly afterward came to him to complain of some exceedingly unpleasant circumstances connected with the room in which the dissolution had taken place, which rendered it uninhabitable, and requesting his assistance. All that is known by his family of what followed, is that he went and entered the room alone; came out again, in a state of considerable excitement and in a great perspiration; took off his coat and re-entered the room; a great noise and I believe voices were then heard by the family, who remained the whole time at the door; when he came out finally, it was evident that something very extraordinary had taken place; what it was, he said, he could never disclose; but that perhaps after his death some paper might be found upon the subject. None, however, as far as I can learn, has been discovered.

A circumstance of a very singular nature is asserted to have occurred, not very many years back, in regard to a professor in the college of A—, who had seduced a girl and married another woman. The girl became troublesome to him; and being found

murdered, after having been last seen in his company, he was suspected of being some way concerned in the crime. But the strange thing is, that, from that period, he retired every evening at a particular hour to a certain room, where he stayed a great part of the night, and where it was declared that *her* voice was distinctly heard in conversation with him: a strange, wild story, which I give as I have it, without pretending to any explanation of the belief that seems to have prevailed, that he was obliged to keep this fearful tryst.

Visitations of this description—which seem to indicate that the deceased person is still, in some way incomprehensible to us, an inhabitant of the earth—are more perplexing than any of the stories I meet with. In the time of Frederick II. of Prussia, the cook of a catholic priest residing at a village named Quarrey, died, and he took another in her place; but the poor woman had no peace or rest from the interference of her predecessor, insomuch that she resigned her situation, and the minister might almost have done without any servant at all. The fires were lighted, and the rooms swept and arranged, and all the needful services performed, by unseen hands. Numbers of people went to witness the phenomena, till at length the story reached the ears of the king, who sent a captain and a lieutenant of his guard to investigate the affair. As they approached the house, they found themselves preceded by a march, though they could see no musicians; and when they entered the parlor and witnessed what was going on, the captain exclaimed: "If that doesn't beat the devil!" upon which he received a smart slap on the face, from the invisible hand that was arranging the furniture.

In consequence of this affair, the house was pulled down, by the king's orders, and another residence built for the minister at some distance from the spot.

Now, to impose on Frederick II. would have been no slight matter, as regarded the probable consequences; and the officers of his guard would certainly not have been disposed to make the experiment; and it is not likely that the king would have ordered the house to be pulled down without being thoroughly satisfied of the truth of the story.

One of the most remarkable stories of this class I know—excepting indeed the famous one of the Grecian bride—is that which is said to have happened at Crossen, in Silesia, in the year 1659, in the reign of the Princess Elizabeth Charlotte. In the spring of that year, an apothecary's man, called Christopher Monig—a native of Serbest, in Anhalt—died, and was buried with the usual ceremonies of the Lutheran church. But, to the amazement of everybody, a few days afterward, he, at least what seemed to be himself, appeared in the shop, where he would sit himself down, and sometimes walk, and take from the shelves boxes, pots, and glasses, and set them again in other places; sometimes try and examine the goodness of the medicines, weigh them with the scales, pound the drugs with a mighty noise—nay, serve the people that came with bills to the shop, take their money and lay it up in the counter: in a word, do all things that a journeyman in such cases used to do. He looked very ghostly upon his former companions, who were afraid to say anything to him, and his master being sick at that time, he was very troublesome to him. At last he took a cloak that hung in the shop, put it on and walked abroad, but minding nobody in the streets; he entered into some of the citizen's houses, especially such as he had formerly known, yet spoke to no one but to a maid-servant, whom he met with hard by the church-yard, whom he desired to go home and dig in a lower chamber of her master's house, where she would find an inestimable treasure. But the girl, amazed at the sight of him, swooned away; whereupon he lifted her up, but left a mark upon her, in so doing, that was long visible. She fell sick in consequence of the fright, and having told what Monig had said to her, they dug up the place indicated, but found nothing but a decayed pot with a hemarites or bloodstone in it. The affair making a great noise, the reigning princess caused the man's body to be taken up, which being done, it was found in a state of putrefaction, and was reinterred. The apothecary was then recommended to remove everything belonging to Monig—his linen, clothes, books, &c.—after which the apparition left the house and was seen no more.

The fact of the man's reappearance in this manner was considered to be so perfectly established at the time, that there was

actually a public disputation on the subject in the academy of Leipsic. With regard to the importance the apparition attached to the bloodstone, we do not know but that there may be truth in the persuasion that this gem is possessed of some occult properties of much more value than its beauty.

The story of the Grecian bride is still more wonderful, and yet it comes to us so surprisingly well authenticated, inasmuch as the details were forwarded by the prefect of the city in which the thing occurred, to the proconsul of his province, and by the latter were laid before the emperor Hadrian—and as it was not the custom to mystify Roman emperors—we are constrained to believe that what the prefect and proconsul communicated to him, they had good reason for believing themselves.

It appears that a gentleman, called Demostrates, and Charito, his wife, had a daughter called Philinnion, who died; and that about six months afterward, a youth named Machates, who had come to visit them, was surprised on retiring to the apartments destined to strangers, by receiving the visits of a young maiden who eats and drinks and exchanges gifts with him. Some accident having taken the nurse that way, she, amazed by the sight, summons her master and mistress to behold their daughter, who is there sitting with the guest.

Of course, they do not believe her; but at length, wearied by her importunities, the mother follows her to the guest's chamber; but the young people are now asleep, and the door closed; but looking through the keyhole, she perceives what she believes to be her daughter. Still unable to credit her senses, she resolves to wait till morning before disturbing them; but when she comes again the young lady had departed; while Machates, on being interrogated, confesses that Philinnion had been with him, but that she had admitted to him that it was unknown to her parents. Upon this, the amazement and agitation of the mother were naturally very great; especially when Machates showed her a ring which the girl had given him, and a bodice which she had left behind her; and his amazement was no less, when he heard the story they had to tell. He, however, promised that if she returned the next night, he would

let them see her; for he found it impossible to believe that his bride was their dead daughter. He suspected, on the contrary, that some thieves had stripped her body of the clothes and ornaments in which she had been buried, and that the girl who came to his room had bought them. When, therefore, she arrived, his servant having had orders to summon the father and mother, they came; and perceiving that it was really their daughter, they fell to embracing her, with tears. But she reproached them for the intrusion, declaring that she had been permitted to spend three days with this stranger, in the house of her birth; but that now she must go to the appointed place; and immediately fell down dead, and the dead body lay there visible to all.

The news of this strange event soon spread abroad, the house was surrounded by crowds of people, and the prefect was obliged to take measures to avoid a tumult. On the following morning, at an early hour, the inhabitants assembled in the theatre, and thence they proceeded to the vault, in order to ascertain if the body of Philinnion was where it had been deposited six months before. It was not; but on the bier there lay the ring and cap which Machates had presented to her the first night she visited him; showing that she had returned there in the interim. They then proceeded to the house of Democrats, where they saw the body, which it was decreed must now be buried without the bounds of the city. Numerous religious ceremonies and sacrifices followed, and the unfortunate Machates, seized with horror, put an end to his own life.

The following very singular circumstance occurred in this country toward the latter end of the last century, and excited, at the time, considerable attention; the more so, as it was asserted by everybody acquainted with the people and the locality, that the removal of the body was impossible by any recognised means; besides, that no one would have had the hardihood to attempt such a feat:—

"Mr. William Craighead, author of a popular system of arithmetic, was parish-schoolmaster of Monifieth, situate upon the estuary of the Tay, about six miles east from Dundee. It would appear that Mr. Craighead was then a young man, fond of a frolic, without being very scrupulous about the means, or calculating the consequences.

There being a lykewake in the neighborhood, according to the custom of the times, attended by a number of his acquaintance, Craighead procured a confederate, with whom he concerted a plan to draw the watchers from the house, or at least from the room where the corpse lay. Having succeeded in this, he dexterously removed the dead body to an outer house, while his companion occupied the place of the corpse in the bed where it had lain. It was agreed upon between the confederates, that when the company were reassembled Craighead was to join them, and, at a concerted signal the impostor was to rise, shrouded like the dead man, while the two were to enjoy the terror and alarm of their companions. Mr. Craighead came in, and, after being some time seated, the signal was made, but met no attention; he was rather surprised; it was repeated, and still neglected. Mr. Craighead, in his turn, now became alarmed; for he conceived it impossible that his companion could have fallen asleep in that situation; his uneasiness became insupportable; he went to the bed, and found his friend lifeless! Mr. Craighead's feelings, as may well be imagined, now entirely overpowered him, and the dreadful fact was disclosed. Their agitation was extreme, and it was far from being alleviated when every attempt to restore animation to the thoughtless young man proved abortive. As soon as their confusion would permit, an inquiry was made after the original corpse, and Mr. Craighead and another went to fetch it in, but it was not to be found. The alarm and consternation of the company were now redoubled; for some time a few suspected that some hardy fellow among them had been attempting a Rowland for an Oliver, but when every knowledge of it was most solemnly denied by all present, their situation can be more easily imagined than described; that of Mr. Craighead was little short of distraction. Daylight came without relieving their agitation; no trace of the corpse could be discovered, and Mr. Craighead was accused as the *primum mobile* of all that had happened: he was incapable of sleeping, and wandered several days and nights in search of the body, which was at last discovered in the parish of Tealing, deposited in a field, about six miles distant from the place whence it was removed.

"It is related that this extraordinary affair had a strong and lasting effect upon Mr. Craighead's mind and conduct; that he immediately became serious and thoughtful, and ever after conducted himself with great prudence and sobriety."

Among what are called *superstitions*, there are a great many curious ones attached to certain families; and from some members of these families I have been assured that experience has rendered it impossible for them to forbear attaching importance to these persuasions.

A very remarkable circumstance occurred lately in this part of the world, the facts of which I had an opportunity of being well acquainted with.

One evening, somewhere about Christmas, of the year 1844, a letter was sent for my perusal, which had been just received from a member of a distinguished family, in Perthshire. The friend who sent it me, an eminent literary man, said, "Read the enclosed; and we shall now have an opportunity of observing if any event follows the prognostics." The information contained in the letter was to the following effect:—

Miss D—, a relative of the present Lady C—, who had been staying some time with the earl and countess, at their seat near Dundee, was invited to spend a few days at C— castle, with the earl and countess of A—. She went: and while she was dressing for dinner, the first evening of her arrival, she heard a strain of music under her window, which finally resolved itself into a well-defined sound of a drum. When her maid came up stairs, she made some inquiries about the drummer that was playing near the house; but the maid knew nothing on the subject. For the moment, the circumstance passed from Miss D—'s mind; but recurring to her again during the dinner, she said, addressing Lord A—, "My lord, who is your drummer?"—upon which his lordship turned pale, Lady A— looked distressed, and several of the company (who all heard the question) embarrassed; while the lady, perceiving that she had made some unpleasant allusion, although she knew not to what their feelings referred, forbore further inquiry till she reached the drawing-room, when, having mentioned the circumstance again to a

member of the family, she was answered, "What! have you never heard of the drummer-boy?"—"No," replied Miss D——; "who in the world is he?"—"Why," replied the other, "he is a person who goes about the house playing his drum whenever there is a death impending in the family. The last time he was heard was shortly before the death of the last countess (the earl's former wife), and that is why Lord A—— became so pale when you mentioned it. 'The drummer' is a very unpleasant subject in this family, I assure you!"

Miss D—— was naturally much concerned, and, indeed, not a little frightened at this explanation, and her alarm being augmented by hearing the sounds on the following day, she took her departure from C—— castle and returned to Lord C——'s, stopping on her way to call on some friends, where she related this strange circumstance to the family, through whom the information reached me.

This affair was very generally known in the north, and we awaited the event with interest. The melancholy death of the countess about five or six months afterward, at Brighton, sadly verified the prognostic. I have heard that a paper was found in her desk after her death, declaring her conviction that the drum was for her; and it has been suggested that probably the thing preyed upon her mind and caused the catastrophe: but in the first place, from the mode of her death, that does not appear to be the case; in the second, even if it were, the fact of the verification of the prognostic remains unaffected; besides which, those who insist upon taking refuge in this hypothesis must admit that, before people living in the world like Lord and Lady A——, could attach so much importance to the prognostic as to entail such fatal effects, they must have had very good reason for believing in it.

The legend connected with "the drummer" is, that either himself, or some officer whose emissary he was, had become an object of jealousy to a former Lord A——, and that he was put to death by being thrust into his own drum and flung from the window of the tower in which Miss D——'s room was situated. It is said that he threatened to haunt them if they took his life; and he seems to have been as good as his word, having been heard several times in the memory of persons yet living.

There is a curious legend attached to the family of G—, of R—, to the effect that, when a lady is confined in that house, a little old woman enters the room when the nurse is absent, and strokes down the bed-clothes; after which the patient, according to the technical phrase, "never does any good," and dies. Whether the old lady has paid her visits or not I do not know, but it is remarkable that the results attending several late confinements there have been fatal.

There was a legend, in a certain family, that a single swan was seen on a particular lake before a death. A member of this family told me that on one occasion, the father, being a widower, was about to enter into a second marriage. On the wedding-day, his son appeared so exceedingly distressed, that the bridegroom was offended, and, expostulating with him, was told by the young man that his low spirits were caused by his having seen the swan. He (the son) died that night quite unexpectedly.

Besides Lord Littleton's dove, there are a great many very curious stories recorded in which birds have been seen in a room when a death was impending; but the most extraordinary prognostic I know is that of "the black dog," which seems to be attached to some families:—

A young lady of the name of P—, not long since was sitting at work, well and cheerful, when she saw, to her great surprise, a large black dog close to her. As both door and window were closed, she could not understand how he had got in; but when she started up to put him out, she could no longer see him.

Quite puzzled, and thinking it must be some strange illusion, she sat down again and went on with her work, when, presently, he was there again. Much alarmed, she now ran out and told her mother, who said she must have fancied it, or be ill. She declared neither was the case; and, to oblige her, the mother agreed to wait outside the door, and if she saw it again, she was to call her. Miss P— re-entered the room, and presently there was the dog again; but when she called her mother, he disappeared. Immediately afterward, the mother was taken ill and died. Before she expired, she said to her daughter, "Remember the black dog!"

I confess I should have been much disposed to think this a spectral illusion, were it not for the number of corroborative instances; and I have only this morning read in the review of a work called "The Unseen World," just published, that there is a family in Cornwall who are also warned of an approaching death by the apparition of a black dog: and a very curious example is quoted, in which a lady newly married into the family, and knowing nothing of the tradition, came down from the nursery to request her husband would go up and drive away a black dog that was lying on the child's bed. He went up, and found the child dead!

I wonder if this phenomenon is the origin of the French phrase "*bête noir*," to express an annoyance, or an augury of evil?

Most persons will remember the story of Lady Fanshawe, as related by herself—namely, that while paying a visit to Lady Honor O'Brien, she was awakened the first night she slept there by a voice, and, on drawing back the curtain, she saw a female figure standing in the recess of the window, attired in white, with red hair and a pale and ghastly aspect. "She looked out of the window," says Lady Fanshawe, "and cried in a loud voice, such as I never before heard, 'A horse!—a horse!—a horse!' and then with a sigh, which rather resembled the wind than the voice of a human being, she disappeared. Her body appeared to me rather like a thick cloud than a real solid substance. I was so frightened," she continues, "that my hair stood on end, and my night-cap fell off. I pushed and shook my husband, who had slept all the time, and who was very much surprised to find me in such a fright, and still more so when I told him the cause of it, and showed him the open window. Neither of us slept any more that night, but he talked to me about it, and told me how much more frequent such apparitions were in that country than in England."

This was, however, what is called a *banshee*: for in the morning Lady Honor came to them, to say that one of the family had died in the night, expressing a hope that they had not been disturbed: "for," said she, "whenever any of the O'Briens is on his death-bed, it is usual for a woman to appear at one of the windows every night till he expires; but when I put you into this room, I did not think of it."

This apparition was connected with some sad tale of seduction and murder.

I could relate many more instances of this kind, but I wish as much as possible to avoid repeating cases already in print; so I will conclude this chapter with the following account of "Pearlin Jean," whose persevering annoyances, at Allanbank, were so thoroughly believed and established, as to have formed at various times a considerable impediment to letting the place. I am indebted to Mr. Charles Kirkpatrick Sharpe for the account of Jean, and the anecdote that follows.

A housekeeper, called Bettie Norrie, that lived many years at Allanbank, declared she and various other people had frequently seen Jean, adding that they were so used to her, as to be no longer alarmed at her noises.

"In my youth," says Mr. Sharpe, "Pearlin Jean was the most remarkable ghost in Scotland, and my terror when a child. Our old nurse, Jenny Blackadder, had been a servant at Allanbank, and often heard her rustling in silks up and down stairs, and along the passage. She never saw her—but her husband did.

"She was a French woman, whom the first baronet of Allanbank (then Mr. Stuart) met with at Paris, during his tour to finish his education as a gentleman. Some people said she was a nun, in which case she must have been a sister of charity, as she appears not to have been confined to a cloister. After some time, young Stuart became either faithless to the lady, or was suddenly recalled to Scotland by his parents, and had got into his carriage, at the door of the hotel, when his Dido unexpectedly made her appearance, and stepping on the fore-wheel of the coach to address her lover, he ordered the postillion to drive on; the consequence of which was, that the lady fell, and one of the wheels going over her forehead, killed her!

"In a dusky autumnal evening, when Mr. Stuart drove under the arched gateway of Allanbank, he perceived Pearlin Jean sitting on the top, her head and shoulders covered with blood.

"After this, for many years, the house was haunted: doors shut and opened with great noise at midnight; and the rustling of silks,

and patterning of high-heeled shoes, were heard in bed-rooms and passages. Nurse Jenny said there were seven ministers called together at one time, to *lay* the spirit; 'but they did no mickle good, my dear.'

"The picture of the ghost was hung between those of her lover and his lady, and kept her comparatively quiet; but when taken away, she became worse-natured than ever. This portrait was in the present Sir J—— G——'s possession. I am unwilling to record its fate.

"The ghost was designated 'Pearlin,' from always wearing a great quantity of that sort of lace.<sup>[4]</sup>

"Nurse Jenny told me that when Thomas Blackadder was her lover (I remember Thomas very well), they made an assignation to meet one moonlight night in the orchard at Allanbank. True Thomas, of course, was the first comer; and, seeing a female figure, in a light-colored dress, at some distance, he ran forward with open arms to embrace his Jenny. Lo, and behold! as he neared the spot where the figure stood, it vanished; and presently he saw it again, at the very end of the orchard, a considerable way off. Thomas went home in a fright; but Jenny, who came last, and saw nothing, forgave him, and they were married.

"Many years after this, about the year 1790, two ladies paid a visit at Allanbank—I think the house was then let—and passed a night there. They had never heard a word about the ghost; but they were disturbed the whole night with something walking backward and forward in their bed-chamber. This I had from the best authority.

"Sir Robert Stuart was created a baronet in the year 1687.

"Lady Stapleton, grandmother of the late Lord le Despencer, told me that the night Lady Susan Fane (Lord Westmoreland's daughter) died in London, she appeared to her father, then at Merriworth, in Kent. He was in bed, but had not fallen asleep. There was a light in the room; she came in, and sat down on a chair at the foot of the bed. He said to her, 'Good God, Susan! how came you here? What has brought you from town?' She made no answer; but rose directly, and went to the door, and looked back toward him very earnestly:

then she retired, shutting the door behind her. The next morning he had notice of her death. This, Lord Westmoreland himself told to Lady Stapleton, who was by birth a Fane, and his near relation."

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[4] "A species of lace made of thread."—JAMIESON.

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## CHAPTER XV.

### APPARITIONS SEEKING THE PRAYERS OF THE LIVING.

WITH regard to the appearance of ghosts, the frequency of haunted houses, presentiments, prognostics, and dreams, if we come to inquire closely, it appears to me that all parts of the world are much on an equality—only, that where people are most engaged in business or pleasure, these things are, in the first place, less thought of and less believed in, consequently less observed; and when they are observed, they are readily explained away: and in the second place—where the external life, the life of the brain, wholly prevails—either they do not happen, or they are not perceived—the rapport not existing, or the receptive faculty being obscured.

But, although the above phenomena seem to be equally well known in all countries, there is one peculiar class of apparitions of which I meet with no records but in Germany. I allude to ghosts, who, like those described in the "Seeress of Prevorst," seek the prayers of the living. In spite of the positive assertions of Kerner, Eschenmayer, and others, that after neglecting no means to investigate the affair, they had been forced into the conviction that the spectres that frequented Frederica Hauffe were not subjective illusions, but real outstanding forms, still, as she was in the somnambulic state, many persons remain persuaded that the whole thing was delusion. It is true, that as those parties were not there, and as all those who did go to the spot came to a different conclusion, this opinion being only the result of preconceived notions or prejudices, and not of calm investigation, is of no value whatever; nevertheless, it is not to be denied that these narrations are very extraordinary; but, perplexing as they are, they by no means stand alone. I find many similar ones noticed in various works, where there has been no somnambule in question. In all cases, these unfortunate spirits appear to have been waiting for some one with

whom they could establish a rapport, so as to be able to communicate with them; and this waiting has sometimes endured a century or more. Sometimes they are seen by only one person, at other times by several, with varying degrees of distinctness, appearing to one as a light, to another as a shadowy figure, and to a third as a defined human form. Other testimonies of their presence—as sounds, footsteps, lights, visible removing of solid articles without a visible agent, odors, &c.—are generally perceived by many; in short, the sounds seem audible to all who come to the spot, with the exception of the voice, which in most instances is only heard by the person with whom the rapport is chiefly established. Some cases are related, where a mark like burning is left on the articles seen to be lifted. This is an old persuasion, and has given rise to many a joke. But, upon the hypothesis I have offered, the thing is simple enough: the mark will probably be of the same nature as that left by the electrical fluid;—and it is this particular, and the lights that often accompany spirits, that have caused the notion of material flames, sulphur, brimstone, &c., to be connected with the idea of a future state. According to our views, there can be no difficulty in conceiving that a happy and blessed spirit would emit a mild radiance; while anger or malignity would necessarily alter the character of the effulgence.

As whoever wishes to see a number of these cases may have recourse to my translation of the "Seeress of Prevorst," I will here only relate one, of a very remarkable nature, that occurred in the prison of Weinsberg, in the year 1835.

Dr. Kerner, who has published a little volume containing a report of the circumstances, describes the place where the thing happened to be such a one as negatives at once all possibility of trick or imposture. It was in a sort of block-house or fortress—a prison within a prison—with no windows but what looked into a narrow passage, closed with several doors. It was on the second floor; the windows were high up, heavily barred with iron, and immovable without considerable mechanical force. The external prison is surrounded by a high wall, and the gates are kept closed day and night. The prisoners in different apartments are of course never

allowed to communicate with each other, and the deputy-governor of the prison and his family, consisting of a wife, niece, and one maid-servant, are described as people of unimpeachable respectability and veracity. As depositions regarding this affair were laid before the magistrates, it is on them I found my narration.

On the 12th September, 1835, the deputy-governor or keeper of the jail, named Mayer, sent in a report to the magistrates that a woman called Elizabeth Eslinger was every night visited by a ghost, which generally came about eleven o'clock, and which left her no rest, as it said she was destined to release it, and it always invited her to follow it; and as she would not, it pressed heavily on her neck and side till it gave her pain. The persons confined with her pretended also to have seen this apparition.

Signed "MAYER."

A woman named Rosina Schahl, condemned to eight days' confinement for abusive language, deposed, that about eleven o'clock, Eslinger began to breathe hard as if she was suffocating; she said a ghost was with her, seeking his salvation. "I did not trouble myself about it, but told her to wake me when it came again. Last night I saw a shadowy form, between four and five feet high, standing near the bed; I did not see it move. Eslinger breathed very hard, and complained of a pressure on the side. For several days she has neither ate nor drank anything.

Signed "SCHAHL."

## "COURT RESOLVES.

"That Eslinger is to be visited by the prison physician, and a report made as to her mental and bodily health.

“Signed by the magistrates,

“ECKHARDT,  
“THEURER,  
“KNORR”

## “REPORT

"Having examined the prisoner, Elizabeth Eslinger, confined here since the beginning of September, I found her of sound mind, but possessed with one fixed idea, namely, that she is and has been for a considerable time troubled by an apparition, which leaves her no rest, coming chiefly by night, and requiring her prayers to release it. It visited her before she came to the prison, and was the cause of the offence that brought her here. Having now, in compliance with the orders of the supreme court, observed this woman for eleven weeks, I am led to the conclusion that there is no deception in this case, and also that the persecution is not a mere monomaniacal idea of her own, and the testimony not only of her fellow-prisoners, but that of the deputy-governor's family, and even of persons in distant houses, confirms me in this persuasion.

"Eslinger is a widow, aged thirty-eight years, and declares that she never had any sickness whatever, neither is she aware of any at present; but she has always been a ghost-seer, though never till lately had any communication with them; that now, for eleven weeks that she has been in the prison, she is nightly disturbed by an apparition, that had previously visited her in her own house, and which had been once seen also by a girl of fourteen—a statement which this girl confirms. When at home, the apparition did not appear in a defined human form, but as a pillar of cloud, out of which proceeded a hollow voice, signifying to her that she was to release it, by her prayers, from the cellar of a woman in Wimmenthal, named Singhaasin, whither it was banished, or whence it could not free itself. She (Eslinger) says that she did not then venture to speak to it, not knowing whether to address it as *Sie*, *Ihr*, or *Du* (that is, whether she should address it in the second or third person)—which custom among the Germans has rendered a very important point of etiquette. It is to be remembered that this woman was a peasant, without education, who had been brought into trouble by treasure-seeking, a pursuit in which she hoped to be assisted by this spirit. This digging for buried treasure is a strong passion in Germany.

"The ghost now comes in a perfect human shape, and is dressed in a loose robe, with a girdle, and has on its head a four-cornered

cap. It has a projecting chin and forehead, fiery, deep-set eyes, a long beard, and high cheek-bones, which look as if they were covered with parchment. A light radiates about and above his head, and in the midst of this light she sees the outlines of the spectre.

"Both she and her fellow-prisoners declare, that this apparition comes several times in a night, but always between the evening and morning bell. He often comes through the closed door or window, but they can then see neither door nor window, nor iron bars; they often hear the closing of the door, and can see into the passage when he comes in or out that way, so that if a piece of wood lies there they see it. They hear a shuffling in the passage as he comes and goes. He most frequently enters by the window, and they then hear a peculiar sound there. He comes in quite erect. Although their cell is entirely closed, they feel a cool wind<sup>[5]</sup> when he is near them. All sorts of noises are heard, particularly a crackling. When he is angry, or in great trouble, they perceive a strange mouldering, earthy smell. He often pulls away the coverlet, and sits on the edge of the bed. At first the touch of his hand was icy cold, since he became brighter it is warmer; she first saw the brightness of his finger-ends; it afterward spread further. If she stretches out her hand she can not feel him, but when he touches her she feels it. He sometimes takes her hands and lays them together, to make her pray. His sighs and groans are like a person in despair; they are heard by others as well as Eslinger. While he is making these sounds, she is often praying aloud, or talking to her companions, so they are sure it is not she who makes them. She does not see his mouth move when he speaks. The voice is hollow and gasping. He comes to her for prayers, and he seems to her like one in a mortal sickness, who seeks comfort in the prayers of others. He says he was a catholic priest in Wimmenthal, and lived in the year 1414."

(Wimmenthal is still catholic; the woman Eslinger herself is a Lutheran, and belongs to Backnang.)

"He says, that among other crimes, a fraud committed conjointly with his father, on his brothers, presses sorely on him; he can not get quit of it; it obstructs him. He always entreated her to go with

him to Wimmenthal, whither he was banished, or consigned, and pray there for him.

"She says she can not tell whether what he says is true; and does not deny that she thought to find treasures by his aid. She has often told him that the prayers of a sinner, like herself, can not help him, and that he should seek the Redeemer; but he will not forbear his entreaties. When she says these things, he is sad, and presses nearer to her, and lays his head so close that she is obliged to pray into his mouth. *He seems hungry for prayers.* She has often felt his tears on her cheek and neck; they felt icy cold; but the spot soon after burns, and they have a bluish red mark. (These marks are visible on her skin.)

"One night this apparition brought with him a large dog, which leaped on the beds, and was seen by her fellow-prisoners also, who were much terrified, and screamed. The ghost, however, spoke, and said, 'Fear not; this is my father.' He had since brought the dog with him again, which alarmed them dreadfully, and made them quite ill.

"Both Mayer and the prisoners asserted, that Eslinger was scarcely seen to sleep, either by night or day, for ten weeks. She ate very little, prayed continually, and appeared very much wasted and exhausted. She said she saw the spectre alike, whether her eyes were opened or closed, which showed that it was a magnetic perception, and not *seeing* by her bodily organs. It is remarkable that a cat belonging to the jail, being shut up in this room, was so frightened when the apparition came, that it tried to make its escape by flying against the walls; and finding this impossible, it crept under the coverlet of the bed, in extreme terror. The experiment was made again, with the same result; and after this second time the animal refused all nourishment, wasted away, and died.

"In order to satisfy myself," says Dr. Kerner, "of the truth of these depositions, I went to the prison on the night of the 15th of October, and shut myself up without light in Eslinger's cell. About half-past eleven I heard a sound as of some hard body being flung down, but not on the side where the woman was, but the opposite; she immediately began to breathe hard, and told me the spectre was there. I laid my hand on her head, and adjured it as an evil spirit to

depart. I had scarcely spoken the words when there was a strange rattling, crackling noise, all round the walls, which finally seemed to go out through the window; and the woman said that the spectre had departed.

"On the following night it told her that it was grieved at being addressed as an evil spirit, which it was not, but one that deserved pity; and that what it wanted was prayers and redemption.

"On the 18th of October, I went to the cell again, between ten and eleven, taking with me my wife, and the wife of the keeper, Madame Mayer. When the woman's breathing showed me the spectre was there, I laid my hand on her, and adjured it, in gentle terms, not to trouble her further. The same sort of sound as before commenced, but it was softer, and this time continued all along the passage, where there was certainly nobody. We all heard it.

"On the night of the 20th I went again, with Justice Heyd. We both heard sounds when the spectre came, and the woman could not conceive why we did not see it. We could not; but we distinctly felt a cool wind blowing upon us when, according to her account, it was near, although there was no aperture by which air could enter."

On each of these occasions Dr. Kerner seems to have remained about a couple of hours.

Madame Mayer now resolved to pass a night in the cell, for the purpose of observation; and she took her niece, a girl aged nineteen, with her: her report is as follows:—

"It was a rainy night, and, in the prison, pitch dark. My niece slept sometimes; I remained awake all night, and mostly sitting up in bed.

"About midnight I saw a light come in at the window; it was a yellowish light, and moved slowly; and though we were closely shut in, I felt a cool wind blowing on me. I said to the woman, 'The ghost is here, is he not?' She said 'Yes,' and continued to pray, as she had been doing before. The cool wind and the light now approached me; my coverlet was quite light, and I could see my hands and arms; and at the same time I perceived an indescribable odor of putrefaction; my face felt as if ants were running over it. (Most of the prisoners described themselves as feeling the same sensation

when the spectre was there.) Then the light moved about, and went up and down the room; and on the door of the cell I saw a number of little glimmering stars, such as I had never before seen. Presently, I and my niece heard a voice which I can compare to nothing I ever heard before. It was not like a human voice. The words and sighs sounded as if they were drawn up out of a deep hollow, and appeared to ascend from the floor to the roof in a column; while this voice spoke, the woman was praying aloud: so I was sure it did not proceed from her. No one could produce such a sound. They were strange, superhuman sighs and entreaties for prayers and redemption.

"It is very extraordinary that, whenever the ghost spoke, I always *felt it beforehand*. [Proving that the spirit had been able to establish a rapport with this person. She was in a magnetic relation to him.] We heard a crackling in the room also. I was perfectly awake, and in possession of my senses; and we are ready to make oath to having seen and heard these things."

On the 9th of December, Madame Mayer spent the night again in the cell, with her niece and her maid-servant; and her report is as follows:—

"It was moonlight, and I sat up in bed all night, watching Eslinger. Suddenly I saw a white shadowy form, like a small animal, cross the room. I asked her what it was; and she answered, 'Don't you see it's a lamb? It often comes with the apparition.' We then saw a stool, that was near us, lifted and *set down* again on its legs. She was in bed, and praying the whole time. Presently, there was such a noise at the window that I thought all the panes were broken. She told us it was the ghost, and that he was sitting on the stool. We then heard a walking and shuffling up and down, although I could not see him; but presently I felt a cool wind blowing on me, and out of this wind the same hollow voice I had heard before, said, 'In the name of Jesus, look on me!'

"Before this, the moon was gone, and it was quite dark; but when the voice spoke to me, I saw a light around us, though still no form. Then there was a sound of walking toward the opposite window, and I heard the voice say, 'Do you see me now?' And then,

for the first time, I saw a shadowy form, stretching up as if to make itself visible to us, but could distinguish no features.

"During the rest of the night, I saw it repeatedly, sometimes sitting on the stool, and at others moving about; and I am perfectly certain that there was no moonlight now, nor any other light from without. How I saw it, I can not tell; it is a thing not to be described.

"Eslinger prayed the whole time, and the more earnestly she did so, the closer the spectre went to her. It sometimes sat upon her bed.

"About five o'clock, when he came near to me, and I felt the cool air, I said, 'Go to my husband, in his chamber, and leave a sign that you have been there!' He answered distinctly, 'Yes.' Then we heard the door, which was fast locked, open and shut; and we saw the shadow float out (for he floated rather than walked), and we heard the shuffling along the passage.

"In a quarter of an hour we saw him return, entering by the window; and I asked him if he had been with my husband, and what he had done. He answered by a sound like a short, low, hollow laugh. Then he hovered about without any noise, and we heard him speaking to Eslinger, while she still prayed aloud. Still, as before, I always knew when he was going to speak. After six o'clock, we saw him no more. In the morning, my husband mentioned, with great surprise, that his chamber door, which he was sure he had fast bolted and locked, even taking out the key when he went to bed, he had found wide open."

On the 24th, Madame Mayer passed the night there again; but on this occasion she only saw a white shadow coming and going, and standing by the woman, who prayed unceasingly. She also heard the shuffling.

Between prisoners and the persons in authority who went to observe, the number of those who testify to this phenomenon is considerable; and, although the amount of what was perceived varied according to the receptivity of the subject in each case, the evidence of all is perfectly coincident as to the character of the phenomena. Some saw only the light; others distinguished the form

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